THE CHALLENGES AND IMPACT OF ADULT IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE VOLUNTEER ESL TEACHERS

Presented to
The Graduate Program
of
Greensboro College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

by
Christina Canon

December 2020

Advisor: Dr. Paula Wilder

Abstract

Adult ESL immigrant and refugees are a multi-age group that originates from numerous educational and cultural backgrounds. Adult ESL classes are offered through various programs, which are often taught by volunteer. This thesis project focuses on volunteers that teach ESL to adult immigrant and refugee students in the United States. The minimal requirements to become a volunteer ESL teacher can consequently create challenges for both volunteers and the ESL program. Teachers of this vastly diverse ESL group need to be appropriately prepared to be able to focus on their students' needs. Firstly, the research paper examines different adult ESL settings, reasons why volunteers are essential, the challenges of volunteers and adult ESL programs, volunteer teacher impact, and professional development opportunities for volunteers. Secondly, the project design is a complimentary online resource for volunteer ESL teachers that offers pedagogical support, such as lesson plan templates, along with cultural support, such as cultural observations by country. The online resource also includes an active forum to stimulate questions and discussion among volunteers and teachers of all levels. Overall, the goal of this thesis project is to support the language acquisition of adult immigrants and refugees as well as shed light on the value of volunteer ESL teachers.

Table of Contents

Page

Title Page i

Abstract ii

Table of Contents iii

List of Figures iv

Chapters

1. Chapter One: Introduction 1
2. Chapter Two: Literature Review 4
3. Chapter Three: Project Design 17
4. Chapter Four: The Project 20
5. Chapter Five: Conclusions 33

References 36

List of Figures

Figures		Page
4.1	Home Page	20
4.2	Teaching Tips	21
4.3	“Teaching Adults English: How to make your students comfortable” .	22
4.4	Cultural Tips	23
4.5	“8 Cultural Differences between Native Speakers and English Learners” .	24
4.6	Lesson Plan Tips	25
4.7	Lesson Plan Breakdown	26
4.8	Example Lesson Plan	30
4.9	“10 Speaking Activities for Adults…”	27
4.10	Further Reading and Resources	28
4.11	Forum	29

Chapter One: Introduction

While I was studying for my undergraduate degree in North Carolina, I volunteered at local non-profit organizations that aimed to support the resettlement and encourage the self-sufficiency of newly arrived immigrants and refugees from around the world. As I met the lead ESL teachers, I learned that many of them were unpaid volunteers like myself. Some of the volunteers did not have teaching experience or a bachelor's degree, let alone a master's degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages. The teaching resources given to the lead teacher included outdated workbooks that were already written in, a whiteboard with markers, and a printer to share with others. As I volunteered in multiple locations, I learned that this was the common situation with adult ESL classes in non-profit organizations in the United States. This year, I was teaching an adult immigrant and refugee ESL class at a community college. Due to the corona virus my class attempted to be virtual but failed quickly from the lack of internet accessibility of the students. After this program, I would like to continue working with this special demographic of ESL students. Whether it be working in non-profit organizations or in higher education, I find that there are several important ways of working with adult immigrant and refugee ESL students.

Considering my experiences, my research topic focuses on adult immigrant and refugee volunteer ESL teachers. This topic is important because it highlights the vast diversity of ESL students. ESL students come from different cultural backgrounds accompanied by unique native languages. They also begin their ESL learning journey at various ages. In addition, school is not the only location that holds ESL classes. Not only are there several kinds of ESL students, there

are likewise several kinds of ESL teachers. ESL research and resources should not be limited to a general group of ESL settings because there are many of different kinds of ESL classes.

To accompany my topic research, I have created an online resource for volunteer ESL teachers, which is presented in a website format. The first feature focuses on practical teaching strategies. Volunteer teachers may not be required to have any formal teaching experience. The online resource provides standard teaching strategies as well as specific strategies when working with immigrant and refugee students. This first feature additionally addresses how to work with multicultural and diverse classrooms.

The second feature in the online resource for volunteer ESL teachers focuses on the diversity of immigrant and refugee students. This feature serves as a quick guide for ESL instructors to understand the basic unfamiliar cultural distinctions of their students. It explains topics, such as immigrant and refugee factors, distinct cultural characteristics, common linguistic factors and practical teaching strategies for volunteer instructors. There is a plethora of cultural representations within ESL students, but this online resource focuses on the top ten ESL students' countries of origins in the United States. According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2017), the top ten Origin Countries of Foreign-Born Children Who Are English Learners (ELs) are: Mexico, China, Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Philippines, Korea, El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba, and Haiti (p. 70).

The recipient of the project is primarily volunteer ESL teachers of adult immigrant and refugee adult students. These teachers may not have a lot of time to dedicate to preparing their adult ESL classrooms. They also may not know how to properly prepare for their lessons. Therefore, accessibility and efficiency are the main goals and attractions for this online resource. The resource does not include paragraphs of dense information. It is designed for users to be able

to quickly gather information. The language used is clear and simplified. Users do not need to have background knowledge or teaching experience to understand the resource. Teachers of any field are able to understand the terminology used throughout the online resource. Others working with immigrant and refugee students, such as tutors, coordinators, and administrators, are also able to benefit from this online resource.

My assumption prior to delving into the research was that money greatly affects adult immigrant and refugee volunteer ESL teachers. Financial support is most likely seen as the single solution to the challenges of non-profit organizations. These challenges are not limited to ESL classes. However, all challenges will be improved, if not resolved, from more money allocated to non-profit organizations. With adequate financial support, organizations will be able to employ trained teachers and also provide substantial resources. Another assumption that I had prior to delving into the project is that it is difficult to narrow down the cultural aspects of the top ten countries represented. Cultures are inconsistent and very complex. It is possible to research the *general* aspects of a culture; however, the users of the online resource must remember that people from a certain country or culture do not always fit the anticipated perceptions of the culture.

The research, development, and creation of this project has made me a better teacher by allowing me to contribute to a topic that I am very passionate about. Passion is what drives teachers. While teachers may not always feel that passion every day, it is usually present when they had started. This project has enabled me to better understand my strong points as a teacher so that I can harness them to amplify its benefits to the educational world. A stable ESL job is not the end goal after completing this M.A. TESOL program. My plan is to never stop improving as a teacher while continuously learning how to contribute to the ESL community.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The following literature review focuses on volunteers that teach English to adult immigrant and refugee students in the United States. This review examines research on the various settings for this student demographic, the value of volunteer teachers, the challenges volunteers face, as well as the impact of professional development and volunteer training for adult ESL volunteer teachers.

Adult Learners

Who are adult learners.

Adult ESL immigrant and refugee students are a multi-age group that comes from several educational and cultural backgrounds. Students may be an (undocumented or documented) immigrant, a person who migrates to another country, or a refugee, a person who has been forced to flee their country for a variety of reasons. They may also be asylum-seekers, permanent or temporary residents, and/or citizens (Parrish, 2004; Eyring, 2014). Unlike most typical language learners, adult ESL students are not learning English to complete a foreign language requirement for their education. There are practical motivations that bring adult learners in the classroom and one example includes the goal of work-force fluency. If an adult immigrant comes to a new English-speaking country, they are most likely to look for a job. Jobs in any field require an adequate level of written and spoken English language skills. Fernandes et al. (2017) described that, “face-to-face communication, the focus of much English language instruction in the past, is no longer to equip learners entering the workforce. In order to effectively communicate

professionally and academically, written communication is essential." Another common goal for adult learners is the desire for academic fluency. To enter in an education system, an adequate level of English is necessary for a student to be able to comprehend the course content. There are a plethora of reasons for pursuing an education, but an appropriate level of English is the prerequisite to enter (Fernandez et al., 2017). An additional goal for adult ESL learners is called, "integrative motivation" (Schwarzer, 2009). This is the goal to learn a new language in order to adapt to the community of a certain culture. Students wishing to become a part of their new community are looking to use the target language in daily settings, such as going to the grocery store, calling for a doctor's appointment, visiting their child's school, etc.

Adult education settings.

Adult ESL classrooms are found in several types of environments. The top three settings include: Community colleges, faith-based centers/churches, and community centers. Of the three, the greatest number of ESL students are taught in community colleges. About one in four community college students are immigrants and the numbers are rising (Connell, 2008, as cited in Dorman, 2010). Along with adult immigrants and refugees, international students additionally take ESL classes at community colleges because they are cheaper, if not free compared to larger universities. Community college ESL programs are spread out throughout the nation. The biggest community colleges ESL programs in the United States are found in California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, Oregon, and Texas (Cohen & Ignash, 1994, as cited in Anderson, 2008). Community colleges may offer noncredit or academically accredited ESL classes. While noncredit classes are most common, credit courses are intended to assist students in obtaining the Associate's degree from the college or help transfer credits to a larger institute or university

(Anderson, 2008).

Similarly, faith-based centers also provide adult ESL programs. Faith-based ESL programs can be defined as a low-cost or free educational program hosted by a religious organization that informally provides lessons of English as a second language. The term church-based ESL programs limit the annotation to Christian programs whereas faith-based programs open the idea to all types of religious organizations (Florez, 2001; Durham & Kim, 2019). There is no preaching or religious conversion during these ESL programs, and this means that students are not required to hold the same faith. These programs are simply hosted in a faith-based setting, such as a church or temple. A study found that adult immigrant students saw their church-based ESL class as a caring community where instructors were seen as social mediators (Buttaro & King, 2001; Chao & Mantero, 2014; Nieto, 2017). Researchers noted the positive feedback for faith-based centers, rather than an atmosphere that pressured religion onto the students.

Along with community colleges and faith-based centers, community centers also offer adult ESL instruction. This broad category can include libraries, nonprofit organizations, private sector programs, adult basic education programs, etc. (Pate, 2019). Community-centered programs and faith-based programs are usually more informal and do not include academic credentials. Community centers can also include supplementary opportunities for adult immigrants and refugees, such as citizenship classes and career readiness. No matter the setting of the ESL class, the shared mission incorporates teaching English language skills to promote community building, self-sufficiency, and cultural adaptation (Chao & Mantero, 2014; Webb, 2018).

Why Adult ESL Volunteers?

Why volunteer ESL teachers are essential.

As the number of immigrants, refugees, and newcomers in the United States continues to rapidly rise, so does the need for adult ESL instruction. However, the demand for adult ESL instruction has outpaced the supply of ESL teachers (Terdy, 1993; Schlusberg & Mueller, 1995). As adult ESL programs face this challenge, volunteer teachers have developed a critical role in catering to this need. Volunteer teachers sustain ESL programs and allow them to continue to grow. Another obstacle that ESL programs face is low funding. ESL programs receive federal funding mainly from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. These Acts focus on supporting adults in their studies to improve their literacy skills for vocational purposes (Anderson, 2008). Volunteers allot a way for programs to provide ESL instruction with little to no cost for the adult students. "[Adult ESL] diverse settings make it possible to offer instruction to those who, for financial, medical, psychological, or family reasons, cannot attend school-based programs" (Schlusberg & Mueller, 1995). Volunteer teachers support the ability to have highly accessible ESL courses. By not having to pay for teachers (or for expensive benefit packages for full-time teachers), ESL programs are able to allocate their money into creating more programs (Dorman, 2010). With more ESL programs, there are more possibilities for adult immigrants and refugees to obtain ESL instruction.

Lastly, volunteers are still essential even if there is a paid lead instructor working with them. Singleton (1999) researched several ways volunteers can be effective assets to the primary instructor's classroom. Volunteers can be utilized with pedagogical and community objectives. To aid with the pedagogical needs of the ESL classroom, volunteers can take the role as

classroom monitor (they circulate the room to monitor progress), one-on-one tutor (they help individualistic needs), co-presenter (they assist presentation, such as performing dialogues), and teacher conferencing (they meet students individually) (Singleton, 1999). These pedagogical roles especially assist the lead teacher with specific student needs. An instructor with a full classroom to handle by themselves may not be able to address each individualistic need of every student.

Furthermore, volunteers can advocate the development of a community. Singleton (1999) described the important role of a nurturer in the adult ESL classroom. The nurturer assists influential ESL student obstacles such as foreign language anxiety and low self-confidence. Nurturers can provide personal conversations and encourage shyer students. "Volunteers can play a very important role simply by sitting among [the students] and encouraging the under-confident and inexperienced students. The importance of this role cannot be overstated" (Singleton, 1999). Volunteers can help build a community among the students and instructors. A sense of community guides adult ESL students to cultural adjustment as well as contribute to their English language acquisition. Proper collaboration between the lead instructor and volunteer can result in a stronger pedagogical development as well as a stronger community. Volunteers play a vital role in addressing the overwhelming demand of ESL instruction, the low funding issue and the accessibility of adult ESL instruction.

Why they choose to volunteer.

Research has shown two main reasons as to why someone would dedicate a few hours out of their week to voluntarily teach the English language in low-funded settings. The main reason is for the intrinsic reward of helping people gain a needed life skill (Henrichsen, 2010;

Durham & Kim, 2019). People feel fulfilled after working with an underserved population, such as immigrants and refugees. Whalen (2013) described the mutual rewarding opportunity for both the volunteer tutors and the learners in their ESL program. “One feels fortunate to be a part of a program that consists of caring and generous volunteers and eager and appreciative learners” (Whalen, 2013). There are mutual intrinsic benefits as the two parties learn from each other in adult ESL classrooms.

Another reason to volunteer is for personal interests. Survey data results showed that the majority of adult ESL volunteers are well-traveled adults (Wu & Carter, 2000). Those who have traveled or are interested in traveling want to interact with people from different cultures, even while in their native culture. “People with international mindsets like to travel the world- not simply as tourists seeing the sights, but mixing with the local people and getting to know them on a personal basis. English language teaching offers these world travelers a means for doing this” (Henrichsen, 2010). ESL volunteering offers an opportunity to gain cultural knowledge locally. It is very possible to create cultural connections in the comfort of your own town. In the same way, faith-based ESL programs have participants that volunteer as a supplement to their faith interests and beliefs. Followers of a faith ministry that supports international missions and worldviews may perceive ESL volunteering as a tribute to their faith organization. Survey data results showed that the least motivating reason for volunteering was for gaining teaching experience and teaching strategies (Wu & Carter, 2000). ESL volunteers focus on the rewards of intrinsic and intercultural experiences.

Adult ESL Volunteer Challenges

Challenges with the program.

The challenges confronted in adult ESL do not always originate from the volunteers, but from the ESL program system itself. ESL programs do not hold stringent requirements for someone to apply to volunteer. In an article recruiting for new volunteers, it said "If you have time to dedicate, an interest in other cultures and a love of teaching, we are always looking to add new volunteers to our team" (Whalen, 2013). With the high demand for volunteers, programs are pushed to lower their requirements. Low requirements from the ESL program can result in unprepared, yet dedicated teachers. Volunteers are not always required to have a teaching background, let alone a background in teaching ESL. A study researching the difficulties of volunteer teachers found that they struggled the most with curriculum development, classroom management, and teaching strategies (Darling-Hammond, 2008 as cited in Dorman, 2010). With non-credit adult ESL programs, structured curriculums are not offered through the program, and it is up to the discretion of the volunteer teacher. The goal of the programs is to guide adult immigrants and refugees to self-sufficiency and English language proficiency. Classroom resources and materials are limited, and often the volunteers are called to find their own teaching materials. This can be especially difficult for those with little teaching experience (Dorman, 2010).

Another challenge with adult ESL programs is the open entry/exit structure. To cater to the high volume of adult ESL students, programs will allow an open/exit class policy where students can join and exit the class as they need. This structure may be attractive to students, it is an obstacle for the teachers (Schwarzer, 2009; Pate, 2019). As part of classroom management, teachers manage and monitor student progress throughout the course. As new students arrive and old students leave, teachers are constantly navigating how to cater to the needs of the current students while simultaneously learning the level of the new student and making sure that they are

not left behind (Dorman, 2010). Protocols made from ESL programs, such as minimum requirements, low resources, a lack of a curriculum, and an open/exit flow, hinder the ability for volunteers and students to succeed.

Challenges with volunteer teachers.

Due to the inexperience of volunteer ESL teachers, there are unintentional outcomes that affect the learning acquisition of their students. Volunteers are challenged with the vast cultural diversity found in an adult ESL classroom. Students come from all parts of the world, speak different languages, have various educational backgrounds, vary in age, and much more (Eyring, 2014). Cultural diversity influences the learning environment, but can be a challenge for instructors when managing the classroom. Studies found that, "instructors of adult ELLs fell into two camps: those who did not recognize their students' cultures and those who recognized students' cultures but failed to integrate them properly into their teaching" (Durham & Kim, 2019). Culturally responsive teaching is a widely practiced framework of experienced ESL teachers that both acknowledges and supports the cultural differences in the classroom. Culture is incorporated in the curriculum, and students have the opportunity to share their experiences (Johnson & Chang, 2012; Johnson & Owen, 2013). Without culturally responsive teaching, students can feel unwelcome and uncomfortable, especially if they have recently moved to the country.

A second challenge volunteer teachers face is the unintentional behavior of treating the adult students like children. Unless the volunteer teacher speaks the native language of the students, the language communication barrier between them may cause this unintentional behavior (Durham & Kim, 2019). As teachers attempt to communicate with their students in

English, they may use simplified words or use improper grammar (ex: “I go to toilet now”). It can be natural for a teacher to use this language as the students similarly respond with broken sentences and struggle to find their words. This childlike talk from the teachers can consequently lead the students to using improper grammar. Students repeat and try to memorize the teacher’s actions. Another consequence of this unintentional behavior includes students feeling belittled or insulted (Henrichsen, 2010). Volunteer teachers must remember to see their students as autonomous adults. Schwarzer (2009) describes adult immigrants and refugee ESL students as *whole*. This demographic should be seen as more than students. They are parents, workers, neighbors, spouses, role models, and contribute to other parts of the community.

> In other words, when we approach learners in our classes as whole persons, we view them as adults with accomplishments, responsibilities, relationships, personal histories, and hopes. Moreover, whole language encourages the teacher and the learner to look at language not in segments but as a whole (Schwarzer, 2009).

Volunteer ESL teachers are challenged with a multicultural classroom, multiage classroom, as well as an adult-age classroom. Those who are not equipped or trained to cater to the specific needs of an adult ESL classroom may unintentionally interfere with their students’ learning acquisition.

Volunteer teacher identity issues.

Research has shown the impact and influence of teacher identity on ESL volunteers. Teacher identity is a multifaceted and complex process. “[Teacher identity] is discursive and experiential and is constantly negotiated by teachers in relation to their life and learning experiences, teaching colleagues, professional mentors, students and their teaching environment”

(Vinogradova & Ross, 2019). Each of these characteristic facets to teacher identity is unique for ESL volunteer teachers. There may not be any teaching experience to reflect on. If volunteer teachers have colleagues or mentors, they do not play the same role as they would in a standard classroom. Collaborative curriculums and regular staff meetings are not common in adult ESL programs. Teacher identity is largely molded by social factors (Jurkunas, 2015). Continuous social interactions within the school context helps to develop the identity. Isolated teaching environments make it harder to learn from experienced teachers and mentors. Many volunteer teachers have noted that they feel as if they "were playing the role of a teacher rather than internalizing the identity of a teacher" (Kanno & Stuart, 2011, as cited in Jurkunas, 2015), especially as volunteers have other jobs and careers, and teaching is not their primary role. Therefore, they may feel as if they are not a real teacher. The traditional idea of a teacher does not always apply to adult ESL volunteer teachers.

The volunteers' identity as a teacher relates to the effectiveness of their teaching. Confidence relates to teacher identity (Jurkunas, 2015). As volunteers do not feel like real teachers, their confidence decreases and impacts their teaching performance. Inexperienced are unsure of their teaching delivery or fumble with responding to students' questions. Lack of confidence from the teacher can impact the students' amount of confidence. Language learners require an amount of confidence to be able to speak in the target language front of the classroom (Jurkunas, 2015). Volunteers need to build student confidence. Volunteering in an ESL classroom is a learning experience for both sides. As ESL volunteers struggle with their teacher identity and confidence, it is noted that it can impact others.

Volunteer Training and Professional Development

Proper ESL training and professional development for volunteers' impact both the instructor and their students. With the inexperience of volunteer teachers, training and professional development is a way for volunteers to learn how to become stronger in their pedagogical strategies and how to successfully support their adult immigrant and refugee students. Despite the need for training, there are obstacles that block this opportunity for volunteers, such as financial limitations and volunteer turnovers. As volunteers are unpaid for teaching, they are also unpaid for any supplemental training (Crandall, 1994). Volunteers are already choosing to dedicate their free time during the week to teach. Any other training and preparation further take extra time out of their busy lives without a financial incentive. Another financial obstacle with training is that the ESL program has limited resources to offer for training sessions (Kutner, 1992). Qualified people to train volunteers are also a financial obstacle in training.

As aforementioned, volunteers have busy schedules with other jobs and responsibilities. Due to this, there is a high turnover rate for volunteers. Volunteers do not have to sign a binding contract when they start. There is no penalty for leaving at any point of time. Volunteers can come and go as they need just like their students (Durham & Kim, 2019). As seen with any part-time job or commitment, it is common to have a high turnover rate. With a high ESL volunteer turnover rate, there is a need for training and professional development to be held continuously. ESL programs need to have ongoing training sessions to accommodate the new volunteers. Small ESL programs may also group together different programs for training sessions, such as adult basic training (ABE) and citizenship classes (Burt et al., 2005). Grouping these categories together in training may result in not covering all needed information for each program.

Types of training and professional development.

Researchers explain that there is a difference between training and development. "Teacher training is focused on the teacher's present responsibilities and short-term goals. Teacher development addresses the teachers' long-term goals and seeks to facilitate growth…" (Schaetzel et al., 2007). There are several types of training and development opportunities that adult ESL programs can offer, such as preservice, in-service, and online training. Preservice and in-service training occurs before and during the time someone chooses to volunteer (Kutner, 1992; Schaetzel et al., 2007). On one hand, preservice is the orientation and training before they begin teaching. This type of training is less common and seen as less effective (Schaetzel et al., 2007). Preservice training may not cover all the needed topics, especially for inexperienced volunteers. On the other hand, in-service training takes place as volunteers are teaching. There are a variety of ways ESL programs can offer in-service training, such as single workshops, conferences, workshop series, summer institutes, peer coaching, action research, seminars, and self-directed learning (Kutner, 1992). Inservice training can address the specific needs of the current volunteer teaching situation and adjust as needed.

Training and professional development can additionally be offered virtually for volunteers. Online opportunities offer flexibility and convenience for volunteers. They can do it at the comfort of their own home and do it when they are most free if it is asynchronous. Online training also reaches a wider and more diverse audience. This platform extends the opportunity to others in remote areas (Hawk, 2000). Online training can be grouped into two categories: Internet-based training and internet resources. Internet-based training includes structured content and delivery. Internet resources have a broad range of self-guided training (Hawk, 2000).

Conclusion

Adult ESL programs need to understand the challenges volunteer teachers face, such as teacher identity issues, unintentional mistreatment of adult students, and inexperience with teaching. As programs become more aware of the volunteer difficulties, they would learn the importance of volunteer training and professional development. This finding is supported by experts in the adult ESL field who demonstrated its benefits for both volunteer teachers and ESL programs. Volunteer teachers are valuable assets to adult ESL programs, and they need to be properly supported to best benefit the English language acquisition and cultural assimilation of adult ESL students.

Chapter 3: Project Design

In this chapter, I explain the rationale behind creating an online resource as a way to assist volunteer ESL teachers of adult immigrant and refugee students. This resource includes practical teaching tips and cultural guidance presented in a comprehensible manner for volunteers of all backgrounds.

The design of the online resource is intended to use clear and accessible vocabulary to accommodate inexperienced ESL teachers. The recipients of the project will primarily be volunteer ESL teachers of adult immigrant and refugee adult students. However, any educator or teacher working with the immigrant and refugee community at any age are also applicable to utilize this online resource. With this in vast audience in mind, the language used is simple and easily understood. Users with any type of background are capable of following every feature in the resource. After all, volunteers in the ESL community come from all kinds of educational backgrounds.

The structure of the online resource is comprised of two main features. The first feature focuses on the pedagogical aspect of the adult immigrant and refugee ESL classroom. Many volunteer ESL teachers have minimal teaching experience, and low-budget adult learning centers may not have the means to thoroughly train their volunteers (Dorman, 2010). This pedagogical feature includes general teaching tips to help volunteers understand lesson planning and classroom management. This feature also includes best practices specifically for adult immigrant and refugee students. There is also a list of external links to additional teaching resources and

websites if the user wants to continue learning beyond this online resource. For example, there are links to provide examples of complete lesson plans and example activities with minimal preparation needed. With a pedagogical feature of teaching tips and teaching resources, this online resource encourages users to continue to learn how to become a stronger adult ESL teacher.

The first pedagogical feature introduces volunteer teachers to instructional strategies and classroom management skills. Volunteers may be dedicated and passionate in their work, but if they teach incorrectly then they may hinder the learning of their students instead of helping them (Durham & Kim, 2019). It is therefore important to realize that teaching adult ESL students takes more than being a native English speaker. Volunteers should recognize the pedagogical implications it takes to best benefit their students.

The second feature of the online resource focuses on the cultural implications of an adult immigrant and refugee ESL classroom. Culture plays a significant role in an ESL classroom since immigrants and refugee students come from different parts of the world, follow different religions, speak numerous languages, practice different traditions, etc. Culture can significantly influence the classroom through communication preferences, learning styles, cognitive functioning, and much more (Eyring, 2014). Especially with adult learners, they have established their cultural identity for many years. This second cultural feature will focus on the top ten ESL students' countries of origins in the United States, which according to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2017), the top ten Origin Countries of Foreign-Born Children Who Are English learners (ELs) in the United States are Mexico, China, Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Philippines, Korea, El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba, and Haiti, in descending order (p. 70).

This cultural feature is beneficial for volunteer teachers to develop cultural awareness and cultural competency. The cultural background of ESL students should be acknowledged, accepted, and even, incorporated into the curriculum. In addition, volunteer ESL teachers need to be open-minded to the diversity in their classroom to make their students feel comfortable and welcome (Eyring, 2014). The cultural explanations shared in this feature are generalizations. A student of a certain culture may not practice each characteristic or every tradition that is common in their culture. For this reason, teachers should think in terms of absolute identity when working with students on the basis of their native culture. This feature intends to guide volunteers in understanding commonalities in a culture in order to best support every students' needs.

The online resource project is designed with accessibility and convenience in mind. With a virtual platform, this resource is able to reach a wide audience. Any volunteer with internet connection can access the resource. Adult education sites can share this with all volunteers and even other related locations. Users can also access the resource at any time they need unlike a collaborative workshop or seminar. If a volunteer attended a workshop, they may forget the majority of what was taught or lose the notes that they took. With an online resource, however, volunteers will always be able to research and review what they need when they need it, and with the events of the year 2020, virtual opportunities are more necessary than ever.

Chapter 4: The Project

The present project is the design of a resourceful website to support volunteer ESL teachers working with adult immigrants and refugees. However, other educators working with immigrants and refugees can also benefit from using this resource. This website will offer three important features to understand how to understand and utilize the multidimensionality of adult ESL classrooms. These three features include: Teaching Tips, Cultural Tips, and Lesson Plan Tips. To compliment these features, these is also a Forum feature that encourages questions and discussion. The name of the website is Teaching Adult ESL 101 (Figure 4.1) and the website address is https://ccanon05.wixsite.com/adultesl101.

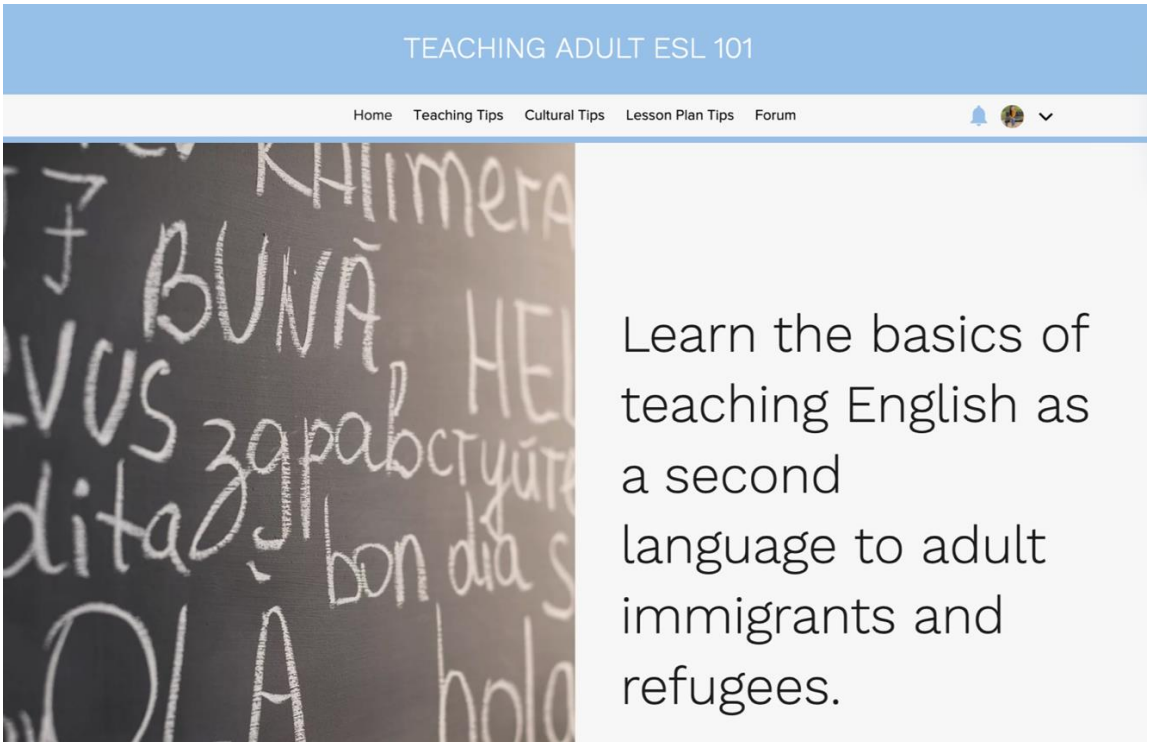


Figure 4.1: Home Page

On the home page, viewers will find a website introduction and what they should expect to find on the website. The page lays a blueprint of the website by explaining the two features as well as the interactive forum option.

In the first featured tab called "**Teaching Tips**," (Figure 4.2), there are three categories of pedagogical resources. The first section is dedicated to listing do's and don'ts specifically related to culture, adult learners, and general teaching. These do's and don'ts demonstrate ways to acknowledge and be respectful to adult ESL students.

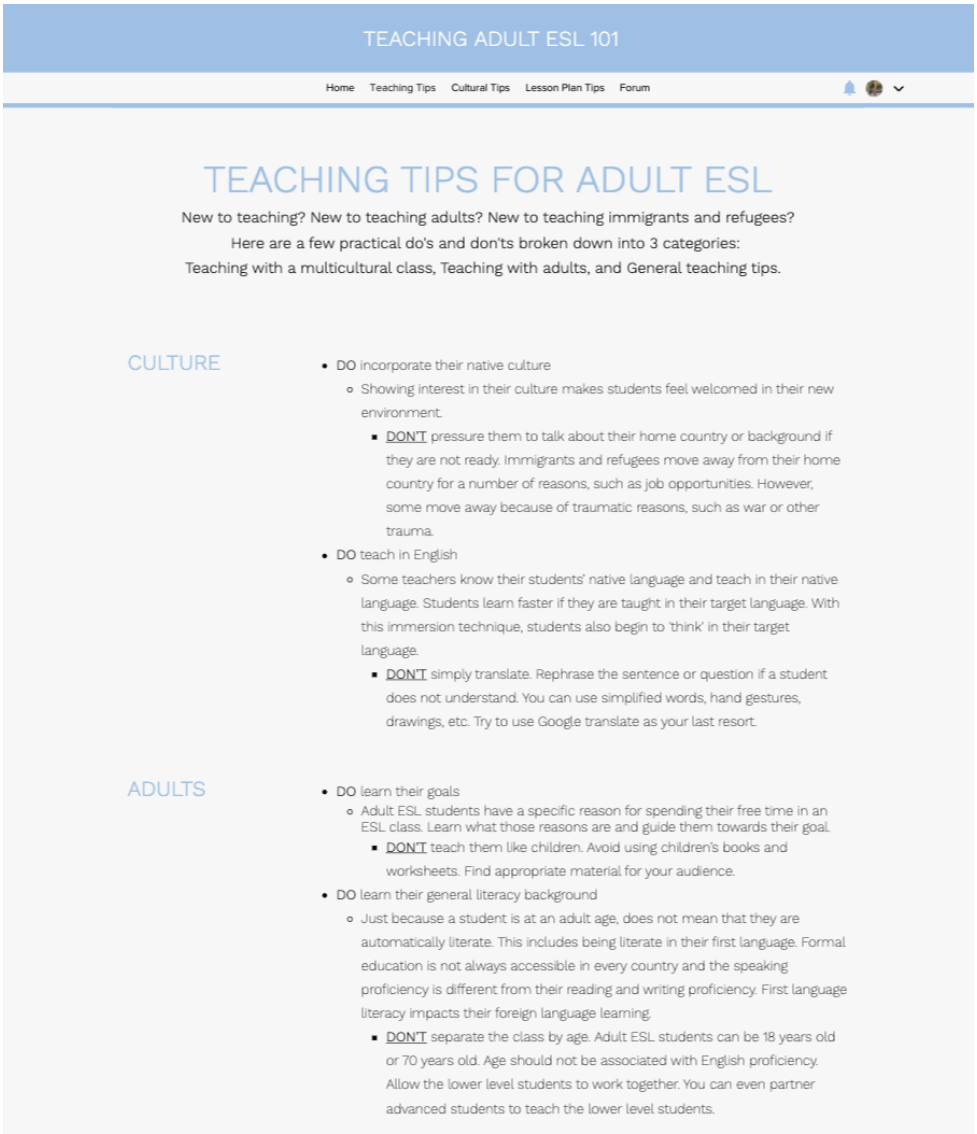
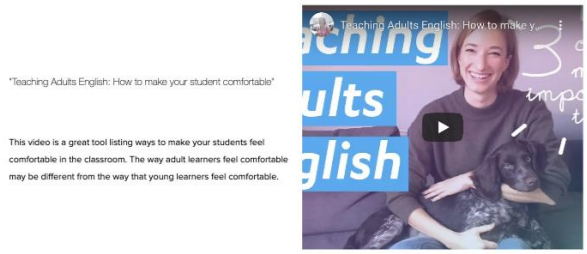


Figure 4.2: Teaching Tips

To contribute to the “Teaching Tips” tab, there is a shared link to the YouTube video called **"Teaching Adults English: How to make your student comfortable"** (Figure 4.3) (https://youtu.be/pNmBJU4dNFo). This supplements one of the points made prior about making your students comfortable. This video provides a way for viewers to learn how to specifically do so. The last section under “Teaching Tips” is a list Further Reading and Resources linked to additional websites related to teaching adult ESL immigrants and refugees. These website links to articles and teacher blogs offer viewers the opportunity to learn more without having lengthy paragraphs of information on one website. This website demonstrates the importance of gathering multiple resources, rather than learning all information from one author.



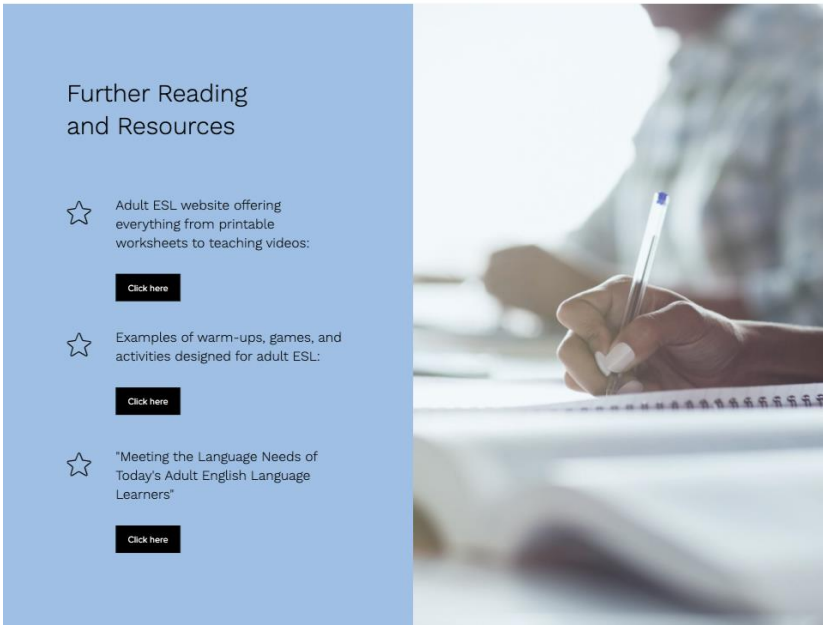


Figure 4.3: "Teaching Adults English: How to make your student comfortable"

In the second featured tab of Teaching Adult ESL 101 is called "**Cultural Tips**" (Figure 4.4). Cultural Tips is introduced with a disclaimer that the following information is cultural generalizations, not distinctive facts about people of a certain country. In addition, there is a hyperlinked list of the three resources from where the cultural generalizations were gathered. Cultural Tips provides a quick glance at the top ten ESL students' countries of origins in the United States. For each of the top ten countries, there is a quick explanation of: The most popular language, greetings and communication, collectivist or individualist, and masculine or feminine. There is also a fun fact for each country, which can be utilized as a conversation topic to share with the class.

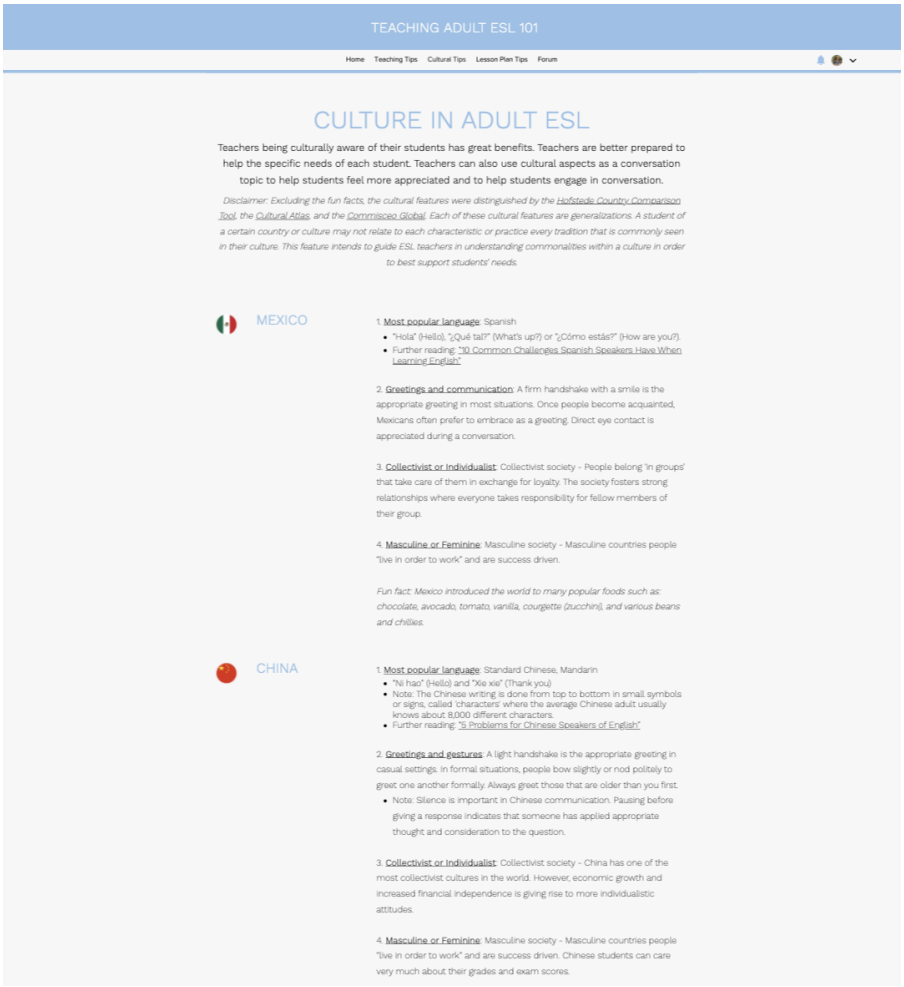
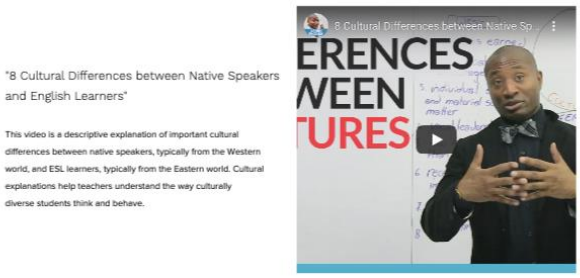


Figure 4.4: Cultural Tips

The end of the Cultural Tips featured tab includes a link to the YouTube video called "**8 Cultural Differences between Native Speakers and English Learners**" (Figure 4.5). This video provides useful cultural comparisons between the Western and Eastern worlds. Also, there is a section for "Further Reading." Similar to the previous list of further reading and resources, this section includes a list of links to provide a deeper cultural understanding of adult ESL students. These links were specifically selected for their relevancy to the adult immigrant and refugee population.



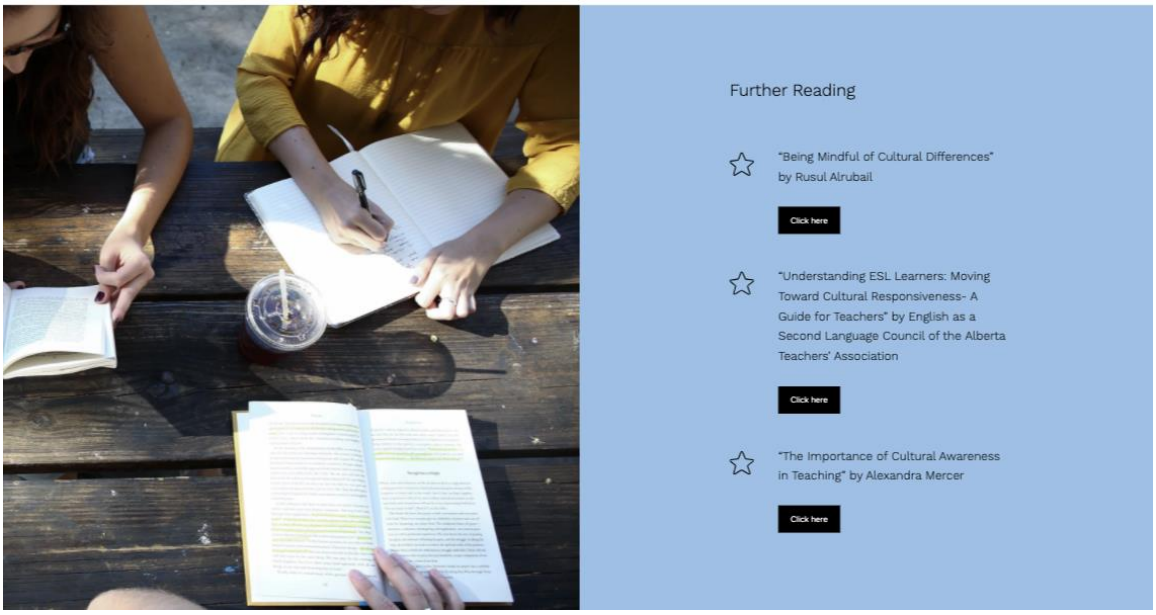


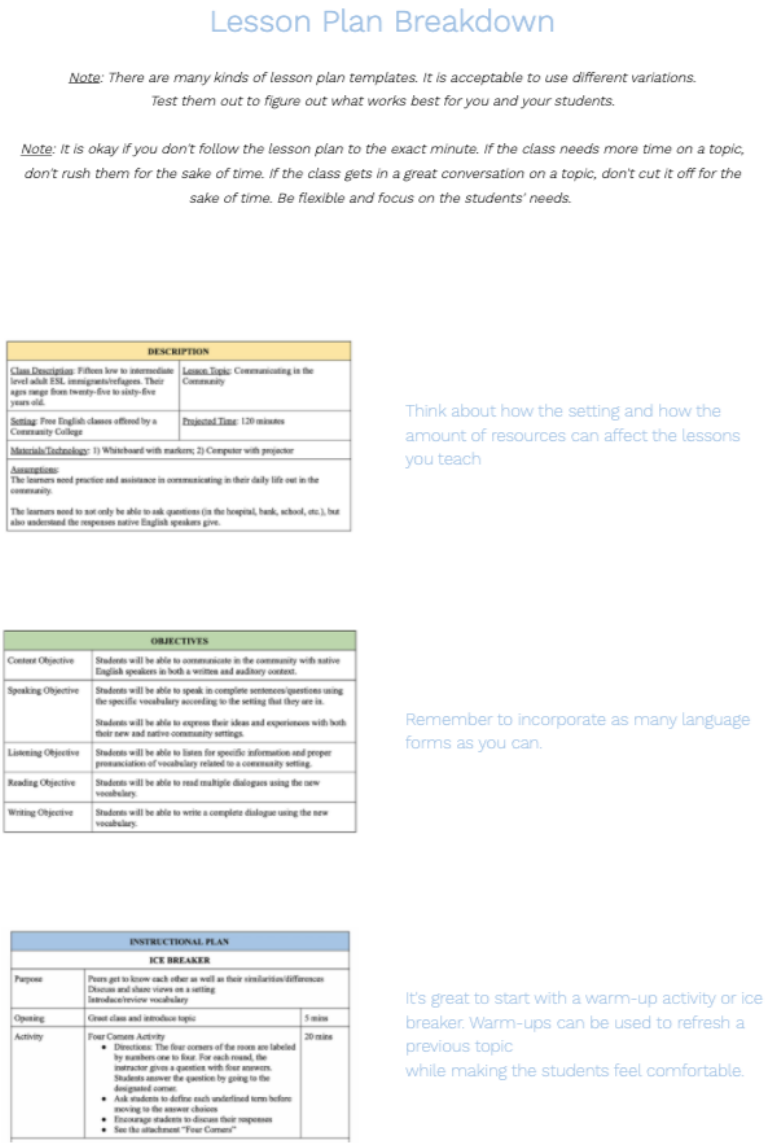
Figure 4.5: "8 Cultural Differences between Native Speakers and English Learners"

The third featured tab of the website, "**Lesson Plan Tips**" (Figure 4.6) begins by describing the importance of having a lesson plan. Due to informal non-profit organization settings and the lack of formal testing, volunteers may feel that their role is so informal that they do not need to create lesson plans when they teach. Adult ESL classes are more than just an English conversation hour. Preparation and organization are necessary to best guide students to their language goals.

Figure 4.6: Lesson Plan Tips

The next part of the Lesson Plan Tips tab is a "**Lesson Plan Breakdown**" (Figure 4.7). The **Example Lesson Plan** (Figure 4.8) used is shown in its complete form at the end of this chapter. This Lesson Plan Breakdown section displays a sample lesson plan for adult ESL

students and divides it into different segments to provide explanations. Teachers should understand why they are doing a lesson plan and how it benefits both the teacher and students. It is noted that this sample lesson plan is one of the multiple lesson plan templates. Lesson plans can follow a variety of different formats.



Lesson Plan Breakdown

Note: There are many kinds of lesson plan templates. It is acceptable to use different variations. Test them out to figure out what works best for you and your students.

Note: It is okay if you don't follow the lesson plan to the exact minute. If the class needs more time on a topic, don't rush them for the sake of time. If the class gets in a great conversation on a topic, don't cut it off for the sake of time. Be flexible and focus on the students' needs.

DESCRIPTION	
Class Description: Fifteen low to intermediate level adult ESL immigrants/refugees. Their ages range from twenty-five to sixty-five years old.	Lesson Topic: Communicating in the Community
Setting: Free English classes offered by a Community College	Projected Time: 120 minutes
Materials/Technology: 1) Whiteboard with markers; 2) Computer with projector	
Assumptions: The learners need practice and assistance in communicating in their daily life out in the community. The learners need to not only be able to ask questions (in the hospital, bank, school, etc.), but also understand the responses native English speakers give.	

Think about how the setting and how the amount of resources can affect the lessons you teach

OBJECTIVES	
Content Objective	Students will be able to communicate in the community with native English speakers in both a written and auditory context.
Speaking Objective	Students will be able to speak in complete sentences/questions using the specific vocabulary according to the setting that they are in. Students will be able to express their ideas and experiences with both their new and native community settings.
Listening Objective	Students will be able to listen for specific information and proper pronunciation of vocabulary related to a community setting.
Reading Objective	Students will be able to read multiple dialogues using the new vocabulary.
Writing Objective	Students will be able to write a complete dialogue using the new vocabulary.

Remember to incorporate as many language forms as you can.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN		
ICE BREAKER		
Purpose	Peers get to know each other as well as their similarities/differences Discuss and share views on a setting Introduce/review vocabulary	
Opening	Greet class and introduce topic	5 mins
Activity	Four Corners Activity • Directions: The four corners of the room are labeled by numbers one to four. For each round, the instructor gives a question with four answers. Students answer the question by going to the designated corner. • Ask students to define each underlined term before moving to the answer choices • Encourage students to discuss their responses • See the attachment "Four Corners"	20 mins

It's great to start with a warm-up activity or ice breaker. Warm-ups can be used to refresh a previous topic
while making the students feel comfortable.

Figure 4.7: Lesson Plan Breakdown

Following the Lesson Plan Breakdown is a link to the YouTube video entitled, **"10 Speaking Activities for Adults..."** (Figure 4.8). This video provides ten detailed examples of speaking activities specifically for adult ESL students. There is minimal preparation needed for the activities described in the video. Furthermore, this video demonstrates the necessity of focusing on student demographics and student-centered lesson planning. While generic ESL activities can be used, there are more advantages utilizing activities focused on a certain student demographic.

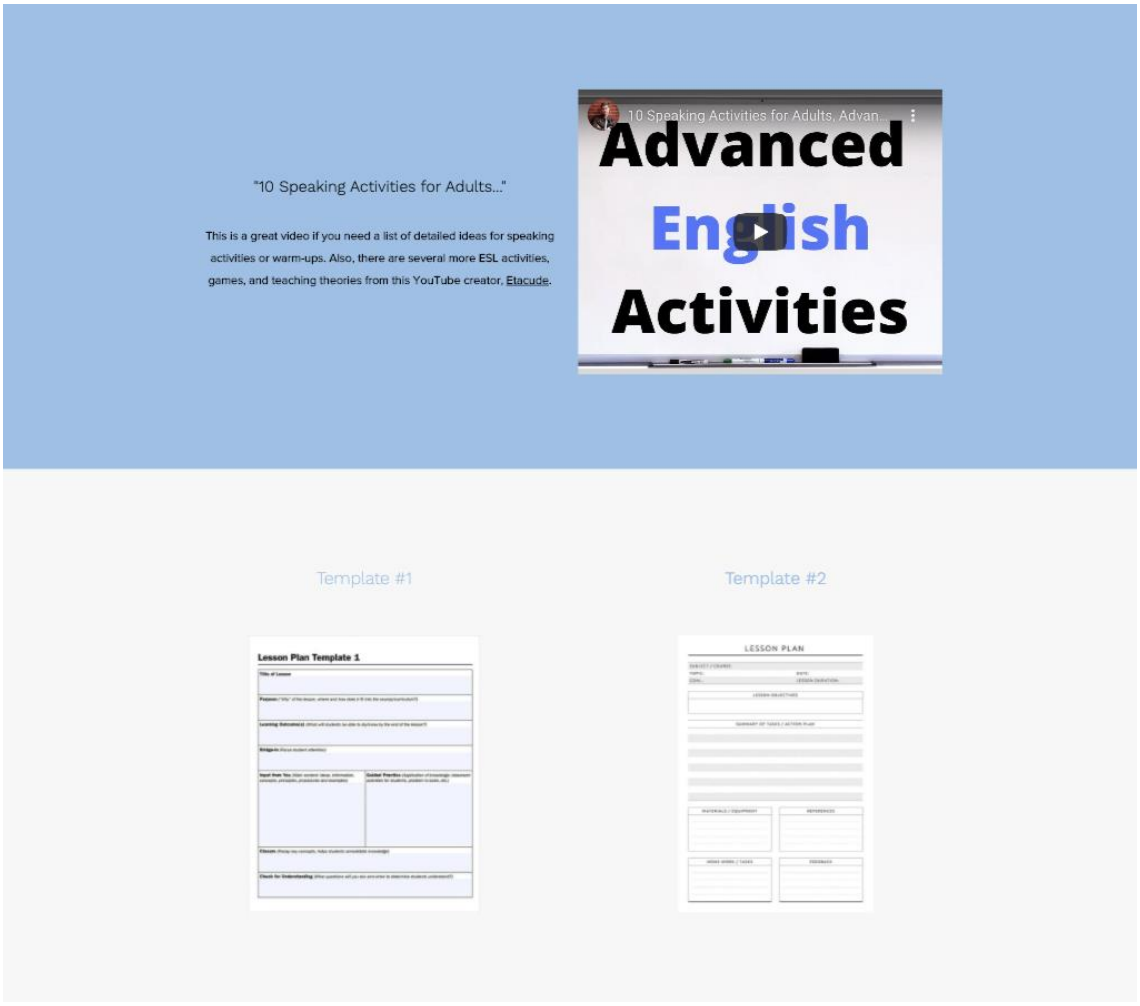


Figure 4.9: "10 Speaking Activities for Adults..."

Resembling the preceding featured tabs, the Lesson Plan Tips tab also concludes with a list of "**Further Reading and Resources**" (Figure 4.9). This list of links to teacher blog posts and websites provides ready-to-use lesson plans and activities for adult ESL classrooms. The second link organizes the lesson plans by English language level of the students. This is useful for viewers to recognize the difference between lesson plans for beginners to more advanced students.

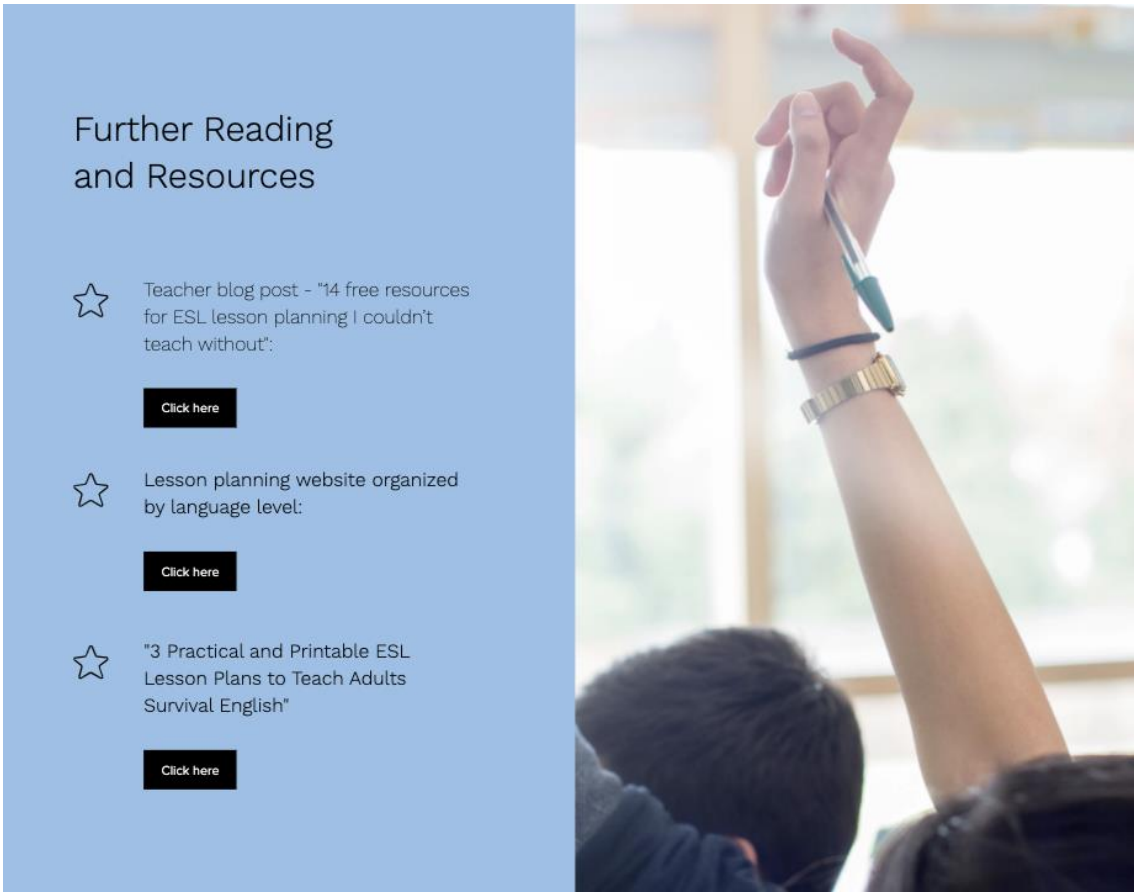


Figure 4.10: Further Reading and Resources

Finally, the last featured tab of Teaching Adult ESL 101 is the "**Forum**" (Figure 4.10). This feature provides an opportunity for interaction. Viewers have the option to start a discussion or ask a question. The forum was initially designed for viewers that may not have colleagues to

ask a quick question. Viewers can also leave comments about their thoughts and feedback on the website.

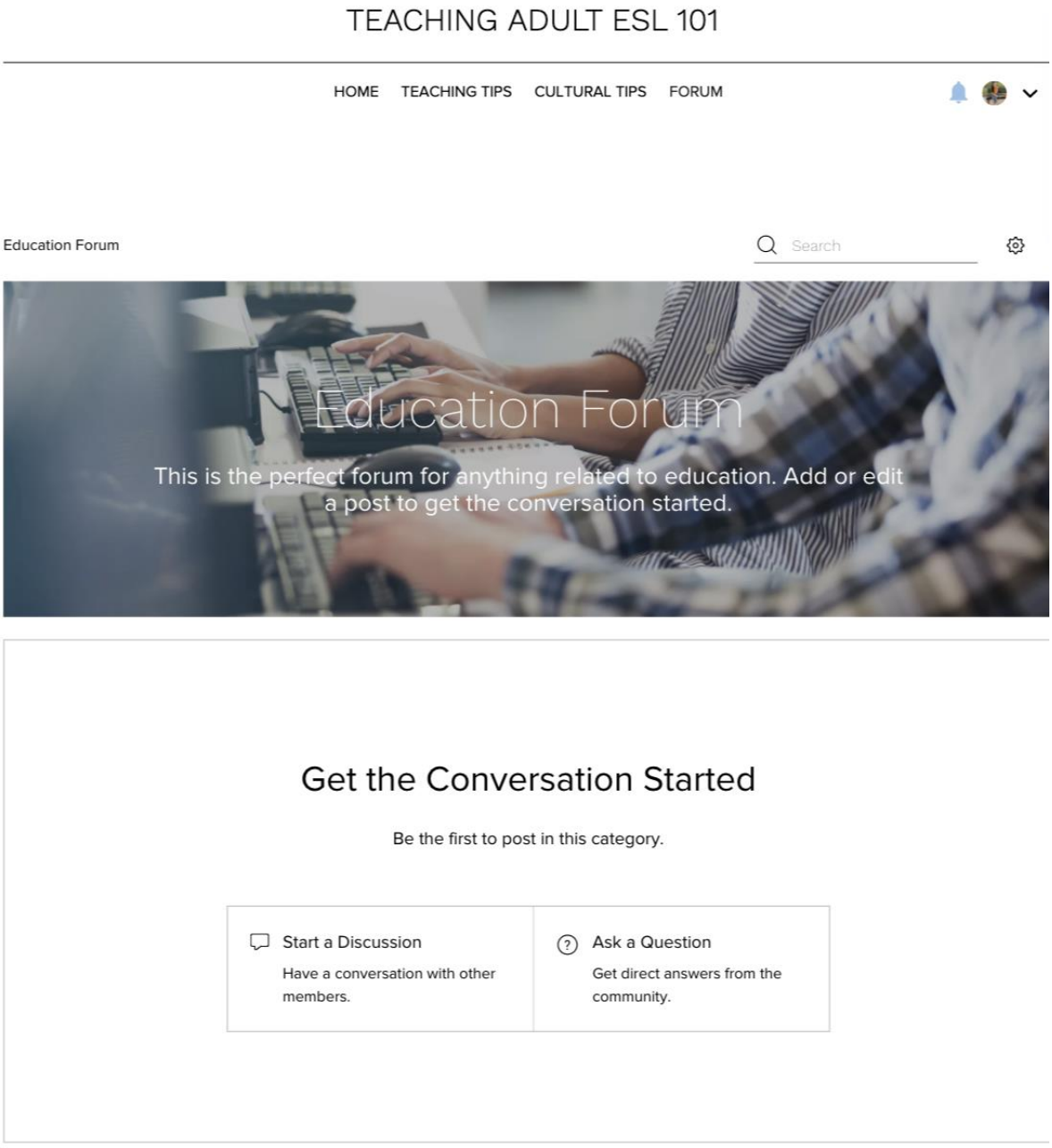


Figure 4.11: Forum

Figure 4.8: Example Lesson Plan

DESCRIPTION	
Class Description: Fifteen low to intermediate level adult ESL immigrants/refugees. Their ages range from twenty-five to sixty-five years old.	Lesson Topic: Communicating in the Community
Setting: Free English classes offered by a Community College	Projected Time: 120 minutes
Materials/Technology: 1) Whiteboard with markers; 2) Computer with projector	
Assumptions: The learners need practice and assistance in communicating in their daily life out in the community. The learners need to not only be able to ask questions (in the hospital, bank, school, etc.), but also understand the responses native English speakers give.	

OBJECTIVES	
Content Objective	Students will be able to communicate in the community with native English speakers in both a written and auditory context.
Speaking Objective	Students will be able to speak in complete sentences/questions using the specific vocabulary according to the setting that they are in. Students will be able to express their ideas and experiences with both their new and native community settings.
Listening Objective	Students will be able to listen for specific information and proper pronunciation of vocabulary related to a community setting.
Reading Objective	Students will be able to read multiple dialogues using the new vocabulary.
Writing Objective	Students will be able to write a complete dialogue using the new vocabulary.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN		
ICE BREAKER		
Purpose	Peers get to know each other as well as their similarities/differences Discuss and share views on a setting Introduce/review vocabulary	
Opening	Greet class and introduce topic	5 mins
Activity	Four Corners Activity • Directions: The four corners of the room are labeled by numbers one to four. For each round, the instructor gives a question with four answers. Students answer the question by going to the designated corner. • Ask students to define each underlined term before moving to the answer choices • Encourage students to discuss their responses • See the attachment "Four Corners"	20 mins
EXPLORING CONTENT		
Purpose	Check comprehension Collaborate with peers; work as a team Provide instructor feedback	

Activity #1	YouTube video discussions
	1. At a clothing store: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwaDRdX2-nM
	2. At a restaurant: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgfdqVmVjfk
	3. At a grocery store: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GlNbzAGZC2M&t=60s
	• Watch each video as a class and:
	  ○ Summarize the video
	  ○ Identify the issue
	  ○ Identify important vocabulary words
	  ○ Identify words they are unsure of
		30 mins

Activity #2	Fishbowl activity • Directions: Students choose one community setting and reflect on it's differences between the United States and their home country. What are the advantages and disadvantages? What do you prefer?	25 mins

	○ Two students come to the center of the classroom to share their reflections. They discuss their opinions and compare it to one another. ○ The remaining students are on the outside of the conversation listening quietly and attentively; note-taking is encouraged. ○ Students rotate being in the center of the bowl until everyone has had a turn.	
APPLYING THEORY TO PRACTICE		
Purpose	Practice real-life situations/applications Collaborate and interact with peers Analyze an issue from multiple perspectives Peer feedback	
Activity	Role-play situations • Directions: Students will be put into pairs and assigned a community setting to create a five minute dialogue using important vocabulary • Students must write down the dialogue and use complete sentences.	15 mins
Wrap up	Students present their dialogue to the class • After each presentation, the audience members give peer feedback regarding the presenters' pronunciation, use of vocabulary, etc.	25 mins

<u>Assessment</u>:

- Formative Assessment:
  - Monitoring and observing student participation as they do the ice breaker.
  - Peer feedback after dialogue presentations assess the content retention and pronunciation accuracy of both the presenting students and audience members.
- Summative Assessment:
  - The final dialogue will be assessed for correct oral and written use of new vocabulary terms.
  - The final written and oral dialogue will also be assessed for accurate sentence building and question building in real-life situations.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

For adult immigrants and refugees, learning English is more than just a hobby. It can be essential to adapting and surviving in a new environment. This transition is daunting and stressful although volunteer ESL teachers have the potential to greatly assist this journey. It is common for volunteer teachers to be inexperienced with teaching as well as unfamiliar with the diverse immigrant and refugee population. In order to best serve the students, volunteer teachers should have some form of training or be provided online resources that they can research independently.

During this research process, I became more familiar with the support that has already been created for volunteer ESL teachers, such as similar website resources, online training programs, and teacher collaborations. The topic of volunteer ESL teachers has been discussed for several years. The research I conducted on ESL volunteers spoke highly of the passion and dedication of volunteers. The issues of volunteer ESL teachers do not fall on the fault of the volunteers. The fault should not be pointed towards any figure in the adult ESL community. However, change can be implemented by coordinators in non-profit organizations to better assist volunteers.

I hope that the project I created helps to raise awareness of, not only the presence of volunteer ESL teachers, but additionally the difficulties and value of their role. For years I volunteered in ESL classrooms, yet I had no idea of the impact I had in my students' lives.

Volunteers should understand the potential they have as an ESL teacher as well as the importance they hold in ESL organizations.

Another hope I have for the project is for active interaction in the forum. Viewers can have conversations with fellow volunteers or ask more experienced volunteers for advice. The biggest takeaways I hope viewers will take from the online resource are: 1) Focus on the students. Their cultural backgrounds and educational backgrounds are influential to how a teacher approaches the classroom. It is not about how well one teaches English. The focus should be on the students' needs and goals; 2) Adult immigrant and refugee ESL students are unique to the ESL community. They should not be taught or treated like any other ESL student. Demonstrating respect and open-mindedness is crucial to teachers of this demographic of students.

Further work is needed in the area of the coordinators and administrators of ESL non-profit organizations and ESL community centers. The obstacles of organizing volunteer training were made clear in the research conducted. However, coordinators have the power to improve the preparedness of volunteers. At the very least, coordinators can share online resources with volunteers as they are hired for their position. This is not time consuming and comes at no cost for low-budgeted programs.

In order for this project to maintain relevance, the online resource will need to be updated with any changes. The list of top ten countries of English learners in the United States has not changed in the last five years. However, it is important to review all information on the resource for any needed updates. Furthermore, the interactive forum needs to be monitored for possible unanswered questions. The goal of the online resource is to be informative, but not to remain stagnant. For example, the videos and linked websites can be replaced if there are new and more

relevant resources created in the future. Moreover, if communities from one of the listed countries wishes to add useful information to the cultural section, it is highly encouraged. Overall, I hope that my online resource supports the language acquisition of adult immigrants and refugees as well as continues to shed light on the value of volunteer ESL teachers.

References

Anderson, L. J. (2008). *Community college ESL teachers' perceptions of their work: A phenomenological case study* (Publication No. 3353095) [Doctoral dissertation, Illinois State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Burt, M., Peyton, J. K., & Van Duzer, C. (2005*). How should adult ESL reading instruction differ from ABE reading instruction? CAELA Brief*. Center for Adult English Language Acquisition. http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/briefs/readingdif.pdf

Buttaro, L., & King, K. P. (2001). Understanding adult ESL learners: Multiple dimensions of learning and adjustments among Hispanic women. *Adult Basic Education, 11*(1), 40-60.

Chao, X., & Mantero, M. (2014). Church-based ESL adult programs: Social mediators for empowering "family literacy ecology of communities." *Journal of Literacy Research, 46*(1), 90–114. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X14524588

Crandall, J. (1994). *Creating a professional workforce in adult ESL literacy*. (ED369308). ERIC. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED369308

Dorman, M. A. (2010). *Understanding the experiences of adult English as a second language instructors: A case* (Publication No. 3425897) [Doctoral dissertation, North Carolina State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Durham, L., & Kim, S. (2019). Training dilemmas and recommendations with volunteer instructors in small, faith-based adult ESL programs. *TESOL Journal, 10*(374), 1-11.

Eyring, J. L. (2014). Adult ESL education in the U.S. *CATESOL Journal*, *26*(1), 120-149.

Fernandez, R., Peyton, J. K., & Schaetzel, K. (2017). A survey of writing instruction in adult ESL programs: Are teaching practices meeting adult learner needs? *Journal of Research and Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary and Basic Education, 6*(2), 5-20.

Florez, M. (2001). Beginning TESOL learners' advice to their teachers. *Focus on Basics, 5*(A).

Hawk, W. (2000). *Online professional development for adult ESL educators.* (ED2023620700). ERIC.

Henrichsen, L. (2010). Basic training and resource connections for novice ESL teachers. *Journal of Adult Education, 39*(2), 11-24.

Johnson, M., & Chang, D. (2012). Balancing act: Addressing culture and gender in ESL classrooms. *Journal of Adult Education, 41*(1), 19-26.

Johnson, J., & Owen, L. (2013). Reaching a culturally diverse immigrant population of adult English language learners. *Journal of Adult Education, 42*(1), 23-29.

Jurkunas, L. (2015). Discovering aspects of teacher identity through volunteering in the noncredit ESL classroom. *The CATESOL Journal, 27*(2), 221-227.

Kutner, M. (1992). *Staff development for ABE and ESL teachers and volunteers*. (ED353862). ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED353862.pdf

Nieto, S. (2017). Becoming sociocultural mediators: What all educators can learn from bilingual and ESL teachers. *Issues in Teacher Education 26*(2).

Pate, E., (2019). Meeting the training needs of Des Moines-area adult ESL teachers. *Capstone Collection,* 3184. https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/capstones/3184

Parrish, B. (2004). *Teaching adult ESL: A practical introduction.* McGraw Hill.

Schaetzel, K., Peyton, J. K., & Burt, M. (2007). Professional development for adult ESL practitioners: Building capacity. *Center for Adult English Language Acquisition*. https://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/briefs/profdev.html

Schlusberg, P. & Mueller, T. (1995). *English as a second language in volunteer-based programs.*(ED385172). ERIC.

Schwarzer, D. (2009). Best practices for teaching the 'whole' adult ESL learner. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2009*(121), 25-33.

Singleton, K. (1999). Using volunteers in your ESL classroom: Suggestions for newer teachers. *The Internet TESL Journal, 5*(3).

Terdy, D. (1993). Profiles of adult ESL teacher education programs: Flexible approaches to staff development. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*(3), 537-541. doi:10.2307/3587483

Whalen, B. (2013). Volunteer ESL tutoring is rewarding for tutors and learners. *Revelstoke Times Review, 28*(1).

Webb, C. (2018). *Volunteer tutors and knowledge transfer techniques supporting low-literate adult learners: A multiple-case study* (Publication No. 10789326) [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Wu, Y., & Carter, K. (2000). Volunteer voices: A model for the professional development of volunteer teachers. *Adult Learning, 11*(4), 16-19.

Vinogradova, P., & Ross, (2019). E. Fostering volunteer ESL teacher identity through reflection on apprenticeship of observation. *TESOL Journal*, *10*(4), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.480